THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI S.S. PALANIMANICKAM): (a) Yes, Sir. While income-tax concessions have been continuously provided to the State of Jammu & Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh since 1.4.1993, the tax concession was extended to the State of Uttarakhand *w.e.f.* 7.1.2003.

(b) The quantum of fresh investments made and employment generated in these States are as under:

Jammu & Kashmir [14.6.2002 to 31.3.2007]

Investment - Rs. 3403.47 crore

Employment generated - 72,209

Himachal Pradesh [7.1.2003 to 31.3.2007]

Investment - Rs. 2053.24 crore

Employment generated - 37,893

Uttarakhand [7.1.2003 to 30.6.2006]

Investment - Rs. 19035.88 crore

Employment generated - 1,40,972

(c) The figures for the State of Punjab are not available with the Government.

Foreign exchange spent by students studying abroad

955. SHRI NARESH GUJRAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) what is the total number of Indian students studying abroad; and

(b) how much foreign exchange is spent by these students annually by way of remittances through R.B.I?

THE MINISTER OF STATF IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) The Department of Higher Education, Ministry of Human Resource Development, does not maintain information relating to total number of Indian students studying abroad at a point of time. However, as per that Department, it is estimated that 1,40,000 Indian students went abroad for education during 2004-05.

(b) As per the provisional estimates of the Reserve Bank of India, education related payments under the Travel Account of India's Balance of Payments amounted to US $ 1058 million in 2005-06 as against US $ 642 million in 2004-05.

Decline in National Savings Scheme

956. SHRI K. CHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the collection from National Savings Scheme has been declining in the country; and

(b) if so, the details of collections during the last three years; State-wise;

(c) whether the interest rate on the National Savings Scheme has not been revised since the year 2003;

(d) if so, whether the low interest rate is causing the low collection rate; and

(e) if so, whether Government consider an upward revision of the interest on the scheme, if so, details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) The National Savings Scheme, introduced with effect from 1st October, 1992, was discontinued with effect from 1st November, 2002. No deposits can be made under the Scheme on or after 1st day of November 2002.

(c) to (e) Does not arise.

Increase in rate of interest on home loan

957. SHRI VEDPRAKASH P. GOYAL: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government propose to increase the rate of interest on home loan;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor;

(c) whether Government have any strategy to reduce rate of interest in future for the benefit of homeless and middle class; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) to (d) With effect from October 18, 1994, Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has deregulated the interest rates on advances above Rs.2 lakh and the rates of interest on such advances are determined by the banks themselve with the approval of their Boards. Banks have been advised to fix their Benchmark Prime Lending Rate (BPLR) after taking into account cost of funds, transaction cost, risk factor, margin and other overhead expenses.

Internal debt trap

958. SHRI ABU ASIM AZMI: Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware that the country is on the verge of getting into an internal debt trap;

(b) if so, the details thereof and its projected effects on the economy;

(c) whether the ratio of debt to revenue receipts is a growing concern for the country with a rise in the internal debt, if so, the reasons therefor; and

(d) the corrective measures required for correcting this anomaly?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE (SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL): (a) and (b) No, Sir. There is no fear of the country getting into an internal debt trap.